United Nations A/73/497

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 November 2018

Original: English

Seventy-third session
Agenda item 141
Human resources management

Human resources management

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the following five reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management:

(a) Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics (A/73/79);

(b) Composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors (A/73/79/Add.1);

(c) Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations (A/73/372);

(d) Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018 (A/73/372/Add.1);

(e) Assessment of the system of desirable ranges (A/73/372/Add.3).

2. During its consideration of the reports, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 5 November 2018.

3. In the present report, the Advisory Committee makes its observations on the composition of the Secretariat and the related trend analysis in section II. Section III focuses on the comments and recommendations of the Committee with respect to the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 150 of his report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018. Section IV of the present report discusses the global human resources strategy 2019–2021 proposed by the Secretary-General and related matters under human resources management. Section V contains the comments of the Committee on the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of the system of desirable ranges.

4. The observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on related matters contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on mobility (A/73/372/Add.2) and amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules (A/73/378) will be reflected in separate reports. In addition, in its report of 18 July 2018 (A/73/183), the Committee made comments and recommendations on the reports of the Secretary-General concerning practice in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, 1 July to 31 December 2017 (A/73/71) and the activities of the Ethics Office (A/73/89).

II. Composition of the Secretariat

5. The report of the Secretary-General on staff demographics (A/73/79), which covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, was submitted pursuant to various General Assembly resolutions concerning human resources management, the most recent of which are resolutions 66/234, 67/255, 68/252, 71/263 and 72/254. The report presents demographic information on the global staff of the Secretariat, which totalled 38,105 as at 31 December 2017. The addendum to the report presents demographic information on the persons engaged as gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors during the biennium 2016–2017. Over this period, the number of persons engaged in these categories was as follows: 4,812 gratis personnel, 1,362 retired staff and 27,958 consultants and individual contractors (see A/73/79/Add.1, summary).

Trend analysis

6. While noting some improvement in the presentation of the statistics on trends, the Advisory Committee has stressed on several occasions the need for more extensive trend analysis, including identification of the reasons for different staff demographic patterns, notably those emerging since the issuance of the previous year's report, to help the General Assembly understand the meaning behind the statistical data and tables.[1]

7. In terms of the trends that are discernible from the data contained in the latest report (see A/73/79, table 2), the Secretary-General points out that, over a period of 3.5 years, from 30 June 2014 to 31 December 2017: (a) the number of staff of the Secretariat and related entities in the United Nations system increased by 1.3 per cent, from 74,960 to 75,903; (b) the number of Secretariat staff decreased by 8 per cent, from 41,426 to 38,105, mostly owing to reductions in staffing levels in field operations that have downsized or closed; (c) in the Secretariat, the proportion of Secretariat staff in the Professional and higher categories relative to total staff increased from 30 per cent to 33 per cent, while the proportion of staff in the General Service and related categories decreased from 60 per cent to 57 per cent; (d) the ratio of staff on permanent or continuing appointments relative to total staff increased from 17 per cent to 26 per cent, while the proportion of staff on fixed-term appointments decreased from 78 per cent to 67 per cent; (e) the overall proportion of female staff relative to total staff increased from 34.1 per cent to 35.9 per cent, with a significantly lower proportion of women serving in field operations (22.3 per cent) as compared to non-field operations (48.4 per cent); (f) the average age of Secretariat staff members increased from 43.8 to 45.1 years (see also paras. 13–15 below); (g) the number of Secretariat staff with geographical status increased by 6 per cent, from 2,901 to 3,074; (h) the number of Member States within the desirable range for representation in geographic posts (see also paras. 10–12 below) decreased by 14 per cent, from 120 to 103; and (i) the average length of service within the Secretariat increased from

[1] See A/67/545, para. 138; A/68/523, para. 5; A/69/572, para. 128; A/70/764, para. 8; and A/72/558, para. 6.

7.2 years in 2014 (see A/69/292, table 12) to 8.4 years as at 31 December 2017 (see A/73/79, table 13).

8. The Advisory Committee notes that the trends described in the current report on the composition of the Secretariat remain largely the same as those mentioned in previous reports (see A/71/557, para. 105, and A/72/558, para. 7). **The Committee notes with concern that in the latest reports on human resources management, there is little analytical information addressing the connection between the trends identified and the persistent or emerging staffing challenges they represent, and the specific actions proposed (see paras. 32 and 61 below). In this regard, the Committee is of the view that more analytical detail concerning the emergence of new trends, such as the decline in the number of staff in the Secretariat, and the implications thereof would be useful.**

9. The Advisory Committee also notes that these are the first reports of the Secretary-General that reflect data on the composition of the Secretariat on the basis of the calendar year, following the endorsement by the General Assembly of the proposal to change the reporting period to allow sufficient time for data analysis (see resolution 71/263, para. 3; see also A/71/557, para. 102, and A/72/558, para. 4). The Committee recalls that, while it did not object to the proposed change in the reporting cycle, it stressed that amending the reporting cycle would not in itself improve the analytical quality of the report (see A/71/557, para. 103). **The Committee recalls its recommendations regarding the analytical quality of the report (see A/71/557, paras. 103 and 108, and A/72/558, para. 8) and notes again that limited analysis was provided in the composition reports regarding trends and the need to understand their underlying causes with a view to developing corrective measures and policy enhancements. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide more detailed and meaningful analysis of trends and their causes in future reports on the composition of the Secretariat, along with reference to the corrective actions to address problems, as necessary.**

Geographical representation

10. The Secretary-General indicates that the number of Member States within the desirable range decreased by 14 per cent between 2014 and 2017, from 120 to 103 (see para. 7 (h) above). From 1 January to 31 December 2017, 168 staff were appointed to Secretariat posts subject to geographical distribution, of which 54 appointments were of staff from overrepresented countries (see A/73/79, para. 44 and table 26). The Advisory Committee notes that a significant number of Member States are close to the lower level of their desirable range and are at risk of slipping into the underrepresented category (ibid., annex, table 2.A) The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Outreach Unit of the Office of Human Resources Management had been contacting unrepresented and underrepresented Member States periodically to offer outreach support and advocacy.

11. The Advisory Committee recalls the statement in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations that due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Committee notes that the system of desirable ranges, established in 1960, which measures progress towards achieving equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat, still falls short of ensuring that all Member States are within desirable range (see General Assembly resolution 1559 (XV), para. 1). The Committee recalls that the Assembly, in its resolution 71/263 (paras. 9 and 17), called for the attainment of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat.

12. **The Advisory Committee notes with concern that since 2014 the number of Member States in the unrepresented and underrepresented categories has been increasing and that a number of Member States are at risk of falling back into the underrepresented category. The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to take concrete steps to address the challenge of achieving equitable geographical representation in the Secretariat and to submit information thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see also paras. 61 and 82 below).**

Ageing of staff and rejuvenation of the Secretariat

13. The Secretary-General indicates that the average age of Secretariat staff increased from 43.8 to 45.1 years (see para. 7 (f) above) from 30 June 2014 to 31 December 2017. The Advisory Committee recalls that an initial analysis relating to this trend was included in one of its previous reports on the composition of the Secretariat (see A/71/557, paras. 106–108).

14. According to the reports of the Secretary-General, the number of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels decreased from 1,373 to 1,315 between 2014 and 2017 (see A/69/292, table 8, and A/73/79, table 8). **The Advisory Committee recalls its comments on successive budget proposals and reports on human resources management regarding the detrimental effect that the reduction in the number of entry-level Professional posts has on the ability of the Organization to attract and develop young talent in its rejuvenation efforts.**[2]

15. **The Advisory Committee stresses again its concern about the reduced number of entry-level Professional posts and the detrimental impact this will have in terms of the achievement of important human resources targets, including rejuvenation and geographic balance, as well as opportunities for career advancement (see also A/71/557, para. 41). The Committee recommends that further analysis and recommendations relating to long-term solutions be included in the report of the Secretary-General for the consideration of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (see also para. 82 below).**

Employment of retired staff members

16. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that 1,203 retirees were engaged by the Secretariat during the biennium 2016–2017, which represents an increase compared with the 1,133 retirees engaged in 2012–2013 and the 1,193 retirees engaged in 2014–2015. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was the main entity using the services of retired staff, with a total of 528 engaged during the biennium. In addition, 93 non-retired former staff were engaged in 2016–2017, while 79 staff were retained beyond retirement age. In total, those 1,362 retirees, non-retired former staff and staff members retained beyond retirement age worked for 215,742 days, representing an average of 158 working days per person over the biennium. The Secretary-General also indicates that 666 retired staff were engaged as consultants and individual contractors (see A/73/79/Add.1, tables 5–9 and 26). Further comments concerning the engagement of retirees are contained in paragraphs 44 to 47 below.

Senior-level positions

17. According to the report of the Secretary-General, a total of 150 staff members of the Secretariat were serving at the levels of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant

[2] See A/66/7, para. 86; A/68/7, paras. 86 and 87; A/69/572, para. 105; A/71/557, para. 41; and A/72/558, para. 13.

Secretary-General[3] as at 31 December 2017 (see A/73/79, table 8), compared with 159 and 166 staff members serving at those levels as at 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2016, respectively. While the Advisory Committee notes the decrease in the number of such staff in two consecutive periods, it recalls that there were 143 staff members serving at those levels in 2011 (see A/71/557, para. 112). The Committee considers that the trend in the number of senior staff should be viewed in the context of the steady decrease in the total number of Secretariat staff over recent years (see para. 7 (b) above and A/73/79, figure I). Furthermore, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, while the job classification standards did not extend to positions above the D-2 level, their principles were applied in the evaluation of positions at the Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General levels. This included a review of: (a) the nature of work, which entailed an analysis of focus and scope; (b) the enabling environment, which included organizational context and exposure/work; (c) partnerships, including engagements and communities of interest; and (d) results with respect to the impact of action, leadership roles and actions.

18. **While acknowledging the reduction in the number of high-level staff in comparison with the previous two reporting periods, the Advisory Committee again stresses the continued need to monitor the overall "shape" of the Organization and to ensure that any future proposals for the establishment of high-level positions entail a thorough review of existing functions and structures so as to minimize any possible overlap in the functional responsibilities at the senior level of the Organization (see A/71/557, para. 114). Moreover, the principles of job classification standards should still be taken into consideration when proposing positions at the levels of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General, in particular for full-time positions, so as to ensure that such positions are graded at levels commensurate with their levels of responsibility and workload.**

Sources of funding for Secretariat posts and positions

19. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with information on the sources of funding of the 38,105 staff serving in the Secretariat as at 31 December 2017, by category and grade (see annex). The Committee notes from the information provided that 14,499 positions were funded from the regular budget, 15,804 from other assessed contributions and 5,626 from extrabudgetary sources. In addition, 2,176 staff are administered by the United Nations Development Programme. The funding sources for those positions have not yet been confirmed at this stage. **The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include information on sources of funding of all Secretariat posts and positions and related trends over time in his future reports on human resources management.**

Recommendation

20. The actions required of the General Assembly are presented in paragraph 55 of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics" (A/73/79) and in paragraph 31 of the report of the Secretary-General entitled composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors" (A/73/79/Add.1). **Subject to its observations and recommendations in section II of the present report, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/73/79 and A/73/79/Add.1).**

[3] Including posts and positions from all sources of funding (see the annex to the present report).

III. Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018

21. The report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372/Add.1) provides an update on human resources management reform initiatives since the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. Information on progress made and recommendations proposed is contained in section II of the report, covering the areas of policies and conditions of service, talent management, performance management, learning and career development, and staff health and well-being.

22. In particular, the report provides information on the ongoing simplification and streamlining of the policy framework. The Secretariat has initiated a comprehensive review of the Organization's policy framework, in partnership with the United Nations funds and programmes. It is indicated that the revised framework, when fully complete, will provide simplified and streamlined policies for the strategic management of human resources. Also included in this process was the first comprehensive review since 1947 of the complete set of Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, which led to the submission of the report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules (A/73/378). The related observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be issued in a separate report (see para. 4 above). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, since January 2017, 102 administrative issuances have been simplified, updated or newly developed and promulgated and that 95 issuances have been abolished, as they were outdated and no longer necessary.[4]

23. The proposals of the Secretary-General for approval of the General Assembly are set out in paragraph 150 of his report, as follows:

(a) The extension of the principle of equal treatment of all applicants to positions in the Professional category at the P-1 and P-2 levels (not earmarked for the young professionals programme) and the P-3 level to staff members in the General Service and related categories and in the Field Service category, up to the FS-5 level[5] (see also para. 26 below);

(b) The removal of the "G to P" element from the young professionals programme so that the positions subject to the system of desirable ranges at the P-1 and P-2 levels will be filled exclusively by external candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented Member States;

(c) The reduction of the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 45 days to 30 days for the Professional and higher categories;

(d) The increase in the maximum earnings limit for retirees in receipt of pension benefits to the equivalent of six months of salary at the midpoint of the salary scale (P-4, step VI);

(e) The approval of the abolition of the requirement that staff members renounce their permanent resident status in a country other than the country of their nationality before being appointed to the Organization.

[4] See ST/SGB/2017/3, ST/AI/2017/2, ST/IC/2017/39, ST/SGB/2018/6, ST/AI/2018/9 and ST/IC/2018/18.

[5] The advance version of the report of the Secretary-General considered by the Advisory Committee read as follows: "(a) The extension of the principle of equal treatment of all applicants to positions in the Professional category at the P-2 (non-young professionals programme) and P-3 positions to staff members in the General Service and related categories".

Equal opportunities for recruitment to entry-level Professional posts, including career opportunities for staff members in the General Service and related categories

24. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in his previous report on the overview of human resources management reform (A/71/323), the Secretary-General submitted a new set of proposals aimed at eliminating the eligibility requirements for recruitment from the General Service and related categories to the Professional category, which is currently through successful participation in the young professionals programme examination, and removing the G to P element from the young professionals programme (see paras. 23 (a) and (b) above). The Advisory Committee discussed the proposal in its related report and recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to further analyse the potential impact of the proposed elimination of the examination requirement on human resources objectives and to report thereon in his next overview report (see A/71/557, paras. 42–44). The General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee (see resolution 71/263, para. 3).

25. In response to the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General indicates, in his latest report, that the matter was referred to a working group of the Staff-Management Committee, which focused on how the proposals might impact the human resources objectives of: (a) securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity; (b) achieving equitable geographical distribution; and (c) achieving gender parity. A review of the academic experience of the General Service and related categories was conducted, which revealed that of more than 7,000 selected applicants (G-5 to G-7 and FS-3 to FS-5) to job openings in Inspira since 2011, the majority (67 per cent) had a recognized first level degree (bachelor's or equivalent) and about one third (30 per cent) had an advanced degree (master's or equivalent or above) (see A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 83–86).

26. The Secretary-General submits similar proposals in his report on the overview of human resources management (see A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 82–90 and para. 150 (a) and (b)). **The Advisory Committee notes that the proposal has been broadened to include staff in the Field Service category, up to the FS-5 level (see A/73/372/Add.1, para. 150 (a), and A/71/323, para. 168 (a)).** The Committee sought clarification on the scope of the proposal (see A/73/372, para. 16 (j), and A/73/372/Add.1, para. 82) and was informed that it would cover staff members in the General Service and related categories and the Field Service category up to the FS-5 level, excluding the National Professional Officer category. While, according to the Secretariat, the National Professional Officer category is related to the General Service and related categories because staff in the National Professional Officer category are recruited locally, such staff carry out Professional category functions within a national context with no expectation of geographic mobility.

27. Information on the background of the eligibility requirements for recruitment from the General Service and related categories to the Professional category was provided in the previous report of the Secretary-General (see A/71/323, paras. 53–56). Prior to the introduction of the young professionals programme examination in 2011, eligibility was attained through the G to P examination, which had been in place since 1978. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the G to P examination was introduced when the General Assembly decided, in its resolutions 33/143 and 35/210, to allow the movement of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category to be conducted exclusively through the G to P competitive examination. The Committee was further informed that the Assembly made the decision after the Joint Inspection Unit and the then Administrative Management Service identified issues with the past practice, including: (a) using promotion as a reward for long service; (b) recruitment of staff

who did not possess sufficient academic qualifications; (c) increase in the average age of staff in the Professional category; and (d) obstacles to the application of the principle of geographic balance in the recruitment of staff from overrepresented countries. While it was informed that the Secretariat believed that those concerns were no long valid, **the Committee is of the view that some of the issues referred to above continue to be relevant.**

28. According to the Secretary-General, the data showed that about 25 per cent of current staff at the G-5 to G-7 levels are from Member States that were unrepresented or underrepresented as of January 2018 (see A/73/372/Add.1, para. 87). Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with detailed information showing the distribution of staff members in the General Service and related categories by nationality at Headquarters offices, offices away from Headquarters and the regional commissions. **The Committee trusts that this information will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

29. Upon enquiry concerning the potential impact on geographical representation of permitting staff that are not from unrepresented or underrepresented countries to apply for Professional category posts, the Advisory Committee was informed that the staff members concerned would become eligible to apply for advertised P-1 to P-3 positions irrespective of the representation status of their country. According to the Secretariat, this would place such staff members on an equal footing with external applicants, who would also be eligible to apply for job openings irrespective of the representation status of their country. During the selection process, the Inspira system specified the representation status of each recommended candidate. The managers were held accountable through the compacts of the Secretary-General with his senior managers, under which at least 50 per cent of the selections to geographic posts each year should be candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

30. **The Advisory Committee notes the qualifications possessed by staff serving in the General Service and related categories and the need to improve their opportunities for career development. The Committee also emphasizes that, in developing human resources policies, all factors should be taken into account to ensure equal treatment of all candidates.**

31. **With respect to the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in paragraphs 150 (a) and (b) of his report (A/73/372/Add.1), the Advisory Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General should develop a proposal for a pilot project, with a clearly defined scope and time frame, for the consideration of the General Assembly, in order to achieve equal opportunities for recruitment to entry-level Professional posts, including career opportunities for staff members in the General Service and related categories. Pending approval of such a pilot project, the Committee recommends that all of the existing arrangements relating to the young professionals programme, including the G to P element, approved by the Assembly be maintained at this stage.**

Related matters

32. In his report, the Secretary-General expresses the view that the principle of equal treatment must be upheld by removing the restriction placed on staff members in the General Service and related categories and at the FS-1 to FS-5 levels of the Field Service category to apply to posts in the Professional category (see A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 89 and 90). The Advisory Committee notes, however, that there are other restrictions within the system of staffing, The Committee recalls, for example, that the General Assembly, in paragraph 26 of section III.B of its resolution 51/226, placed limitations on the eligibility of individuals on short-term

appointments[6] filling regular budget posts or extrabudgetary posts of one year or more. The Committee also recalls it observations on the matter contained in its previous report (A/71/557, paras. 69–72). With regard to the issue of the treatment of external and internal candidates in the recruitment processes, the Committee notes that the proportion of appointments granted to external candidates averaged 30 per cent for the period from 2013 to 2017, decreasing from 37 per cent in 2013 to 29 per cent in 2017 (see A/72/767, para. 44 and table 18). It is also relevant that not all successful candidates of the young professionals programme are placed in vacant positions[7] (see para. 14 above and A/71/323, para. 52). The Committee notes that the latest reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management do not explicitly address these matters. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that there is an urgent need to establish measures to ensure equal opportunities for internal and external applicants to vacancies. The Committee continues to believe that some inequity may exist on the basis of the physical location of the applicant. The Committee recalls that the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, when considering applicants for vacancies, to give equal treatment to internal and external candidates (resolution 68/265, para. 10).**

33. In his reports on mobility, the Secretary-General indicates that, in the vacancy exercises in 2016 and 2017 for the Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network (POLNET), there were 494 selections, of which 60 per cent resulted from recruit-from-roster job openings and 40 per cent from position-specific job openings (see A/73/372/Add.2, paras. 18 and 21, and A/72/767, paras. 12 and 19). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that roster placement takes place through two merit-based processes (for generic and specific job openings), both of which are open to all applicants irrespective of nationality and gender. A total of 60,986 applicants were on the rosters as at 11 October 2018. **The Committee considers that the information provided on recruitment from rosters and its impact on the potential recruitment of external candidates is insufficient in the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management. The Committee therefore expects that detailed information will be provided in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management, including information on related policies, the types of rosters managed by different Secretariat offices, estimated costs of establishing and maintaining the rosters, the availability of the roster candidates at the time of job offerings and the number of selections made from rosters.**

34. Another related matter concerns the use of temporary assignments in the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its most recent report, the Board of Auditors reviewed the granting of special post allowance to staff assuming higher-level responsibilities. The Board observed that it did not appear that such assignments had been limited to exceptional cases and pointed out that in 2016–2017, 2,468 temporary assignments involving a special post allowance had been granted, with 718 such assignments lasting for more than one year. The Board also indicated that the United Nations had stated that the overuse of temporary job openings was one of the main factors preventing stronger workforce planning in the Organization (see A/73/5 (Vol. I), chap. II, paras. 93–99; see also A/73/430, para. 34).

[6] Under the revised contractual arrangements, this covers individuals holding temporary appointments pursuant to staff rule 4.12.

[7] Since the inception of the young professionals programme in 2011, 578 individuals have been rostered, of whom 316 (54.67 per cent) have been placed in positions earmarked for the programme, 108 (18.69 per cent) remain on the roster, 86 (14.88 per cent) have been removed from the roster for reasons such as voluntary withdrawal or declining an offer, and 68 (11.76 per cent) have reached the expiration date (as at 31 December 2017) (see A/73/372/Add.1, annex I).

35. **The Advisory Committee also stresses the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat and the use of additional working languages in specific duty stations and/or for entities as mandated. The General Assembly has acknowledged that language skills constitute an important element of the selection and training processes and has therefore affirmed that a good command of the official language or languages spoken in the country of residence should be taken into account as an additional asset during those processes (see resolution 71/263, paras. 10 and 11).**

Reduction of the job posting period from 45 to 30 days

36. In its resolution 71/263, the General Assembly decided to reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 60 days to 45 days for jobs in the Professional and higher categories, on a provisional basis as a pilot phase. The Assembly also decided to keep this measure under review and requested the Secretary-General to report on its full impact in his next overview report.

37. Information on the impact of the 45-day posting period on recruitment timelines is provided in paragraphs 60 to 63 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372/Add.1). Since January 2017, the Secretariat has been posting, on a pilot basis, job openings in the Professional and higher categories at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions for 45 days. Comparative data for 2016 (60-day posting) and 2017 (45-day posting) for non-roster selections is provided in table 6 of the report, which shows a reduction of 34 days in the average recruitment timelines for 2017. The Secretary-General indicates that the reduced posting time in 2017 did not have any adverse impact on the number of applicants, as there was an increase in the average number of applications overall, including from developing countries. The Secretary-General therefore reiterates the request previously made to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session to reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings to 30 days (see A/71/323, para. 43).

38. In terms of overall recruitment timelines against the target of 120 days, the Advisory Committee notes from table 5 of the report of the Secretary-General that, notwithstanding some improvement in 2017, between 2014 and 2017 the average duration of the recruitment process increased from 194 days to 206 days in 2017 at Headquarters departments and offices, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions. Similarly, the average duration for recruitment for field missions increased from 84 days to 116 days during the same period. The Secretary-General indicates that a significant proportion of this time was spent by hiring managers in reviewing, evaluating and assessing job applicants in Headquarters departments and offices, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions (see tables 2 and 3 below), while the shorter recruitment timeline in field missions was due mainly to the use of the recruit-from-roster modality (see A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 52, 55, 56 and footnote 1). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Secretariat was currently in the process of revising the staff selection system to enable hiring managers to adopt faster evaluation and assessment tools and to use technology, such as video interviewing, to assist with assessment. The procedural requirements, for recording evaluation results in Inspira, which have already been streamlined in 2017, will also be further simplified to expedite the recruitment process.

39. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a breakdown of the recruitment timelines for each job network for 2017 compared with the overall data reflected in table 5 of the report of the Secretary-General (see table 1).

Table 1
Average recruitment timelines in 2017, from job posting to selection of a candidate, by job network
(Average duration in calendar days)

Job network	*Headquarters departments and offices, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions*	*Field missions*	*Overall*
Economic, Social and Development Network	212	122	209
Information and Telecommunication Technology Network	181	84	127
Internal Security and Safety Network	188	98	104
Legal Network	141	71	115
Logistics, Transportation and Supply Chain Network	216	103	118
Management and Administration Network	193	92	135
Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network	389	254	301
Public Information and Conference Management Network	159	120	154
Science Network	190	102	135
Average total recruitment timeline	**206**	**116**	**159**

Note: Includes job openings from the FS-4 to FS-7 and the P-3 to D-1 levels subject to the staff selection system outlined in ST/AI/2010/3, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.1, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.2 and ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.3, excluding generic job openings used to create rosters for the field. Does not include temporary job openings advertised in accordance with ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 or job openings advertised under the staff selection and managed mobility system outlined in ST/AI/2016/1 and ST/AI/2016/1/Amend.1. Field missions include special political missions and peacekeeping missions.

40. The Advisory Committee recalls that reductions in the posting period have been proposed to the General Assembly at various times over the past decade. The Committee supported the proposal of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at the seventy-first session (see A/71/557, paras. 34–36). **In its resolution 71/263, the Assembly decided to reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 60 days to 45 days for jobs in the Professional and higher categories, on a provisional basis as a pilot phase, and to keep this measure under review. In addition, the Committee expects that the Secretary-General will provide more detailed information on the 45-day posting exercise, including the pattern of applications received during the 45-day period. Pending further decision by the Assembly, the Committee does not, at this stage, recommend approval of the proposal of the Secretary-General to further reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 45 days to 30 days for the Professional and higher categories.**

41. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a breakdown of the timelines for different stages of the recruitment process in Headquarters departments and offices, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and field missions (tables 2 and 3).

Table 2

Average recruitment timelines in Headquarters departments and offices, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions by stage of the recruitment process

(Average duration in calendar days)

	Selection year			
Stage of the recruitment process	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Job posting	50	49	52	47
Initial human resources eligibility assessment	10	7	6	6
Recommendation of candidates	108	115	136	126
Status matrix review	6	6	6	6
Central review body endorsement	22	30	26	16
Selection by head of department/office	15	14	14	17
Average total recruitment timeline[a]	**194**	**199**	**222**	**206**

Note: Includes job openings from the FS-4 to FS-7 and the P-3 to D-1 levels subject to the staff selection system outlined in ST/AI/2010/3, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.1, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.2 and ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.3. Does not include temporary job openings advertised in accordance with ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 or job openings advertised under the staff selection and managed mobility system outlined in ST/AI/2016/1 and ST/AI/2016/1/Amend.1.

[a] The average total recruitment timeline is not equal to the sum of each step in the table, since not all job openings go through every step (such as roster selections, or recruit-from-roster job openings that did not require central review body endorsement).

Table 3

Average recruitment timelines in the field missions by stage of the recruitment process

(Average duration in calendar days)

	Selection year			
Stage of the recruitment process	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Job posting	15	16	16	14
Initial human resources eligibility assessment	12	8	8	10
Recommendation of candidates	63	59	74	74
Status matrix review	0	4	1	1
Central review body endorsement	47	46	30	28
Selection by head of department/office	15	22	33	22
Average total recruitment timeline[a]	**84**	**102**	**129**	**116**

Note: Includes job openings from the FS-4 to FS-7 and P-3 to D-1 levels subject to the staff selection system outlined in ST/AI/2010/3, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.1, ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.2 and ST/AI/2010/3/Amend.3. Does not include temporary job openings advertised in accordance with ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 or job openings advertised under the staff selection and managed mobility system outlined in ST/AI/2016/1 and ST/AI/2016/1/Amend.1.

[a] The average total recruitment timeline is not equal to the sum of each step in the table, since not all job openings go through every step (such as roster selections, or recruit-from-roster job openings that did not require central review body endorsement).

42. **The Advisory Committee notes that, while the Secretary-General's recommendation only focuses on the job posting period for applicants, it is, in fact, just one of the factors affecting the overall recruitment timelines and that**

other factors, such as the manager's review and evaluation stage, contribute to considerable delays in the recruitment process. The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to undertake more analysis on each of the stages of the recruitment process, by job network, with emphasis on their respective impact on the delays. Information in this regard should be provided to the General Assembly in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management.

43. In addition, the Advisory Committee recalls that the breakdown of staffing timelines, as indicated by the Secretary-General, does not include the time taken for the classification of a particular post, which is required for new posts, posts not previously classified and posts whose duties and responsibilities have changed substantially (see A/71/577, para. 29). The Secretary-General provides information on efforts to engage in common system collaboration on job classification and reference checks in paragraphs 15 and 16 of his report (A/73/372/Add.1). He indicates that, for the first time, the Secretariat is leading a system-wide effort to streamline and standardize the way jobs are classified and references are checked in the United Nations common system. **Taking into account the fact that job classification exercises could also be time-consuming, the Committee is of the view that all efforts should be made to expedite the job classification process. The Committee welcomes the ongoing system-wide effort to streamline and standardize processes and looks forward to receiving information on the progress achieved in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management.**

Employment of retired staff members

44. The Secretary-General proposes to increase the maximum earnings limit for retirees in receipt of pension benefits to the equivalent of six months of salary at the midpoint of the salary scale (P-4, step VI) (see A/73/372/Add.1, para. 150 (d)). Information in this regard is provided in paragraphs 17 to 21 of his report. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General proposed a similar recommendation in his previous report on the overview of human resources management reform and that at that time, the General Assembly endorsed the Committee's recommendation against the proposal (see A/71/557, paras. 50–54, and resolution 71/263).

45. The Advisory Committee notes from the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat that the number of retirees engaged by the Secretariat has increased slightly over the past few bienniums. For the 1,362 retirees engaged in 2016–2017, each worked for an average of 158 days over the biennium. The Committee also notes the increase in the average age of serving Secretariat staff members; an analysis of staff demographics indicates an overall reduction, since June 2013, in the number of staff members between the ages of 18 and 44, and in particular a significant decrease, totalling 3,668 staff, in the 30–34 and 35–39 age groups (see A/73/372/Add.1, annex II, and paras. 13–15 above).

46. Another factor in the rising average age is the increase in the mandatory age of separation since 2014, when the General Assembly decided, for staff appointed on or after 1 January 2014, to raise the mandatory age of separation from 62 to 65 years of age (see resolution 69/251), and, for staff recruited before 1 January 2014, that the organizations of the United Nations common system should raise the age of mandatory separation to 65 years, at the latest by 1 January 2018, taking into account the acquired rights of staff (see resolution 70/244, sect. I). The Committee notes that the latter provision has been implemented as from 1 January 2018.

47. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that increasing the permissible earnings of retired former United Nations staff members would likely lead to an**

increased frequency of engaging retirees, a practice that runs contrary to efforts to rejuvenate the Secretariat and exercise better workforce succession planning. Given the recent past instances of using retirees in senior decision-making positions for protracted periods of time, the Committee does not favour proposals that would effectively facilitate such practices. The Committee recommends against the Secretary-General's proposal in this regard (see A/71/557, para. 54).

Permanent residence status

48. The Secretary-General provides background information on and the rationale for the proposed abolishment of the long-standing requirement that staff members renounce their permanent resident status in any country other than the country of their nationality upon taking up an appointment with the Organization (see A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 22–27). He indicates that the policy, in place since 1953, continued to be applied until 2013, when the United Nations Appeals Tribunal determined that there was no legal basis for such a practice and that it could not be justified in terms of ensuring wide geographical distribution, as geographical status is determined on the basis of the recognized nationality, rather than the permanent resident status, of a given staff member. Since then, according to the report of the Secretary-General, new staff members have not, in practice, been required to renounce their permanent resident status (ibid., para. 23).

49. The Advisory Committee recalls that this is the same proposal that the Secretary-General put forward in earlier reports (see A/71/258, para. 54, and A/69/190, sect. III.E), which the Committee supported in recommending that the General Assembly reconsider this requirement (see also A/64/518, paras. 41–46, and A/65/537, paras. 81–86. The Committee recalls that the Assembly took no action on those proposals. **The Committee therefore reiterates its recommendation that the Assembly reconsider the requirement for staff members to renounce their permanent resident status in a country other than the country of their nationality** (see also A/71/557, para. 130, and A/69/572, para. 53).

Recommendation

50. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018 (A/73/372/Add.1), the actions required of the General Assembly are set out in paragraph 150 (a) to (e) of that report. The Advisory Committee requested information on the financial implications of each of the proposals and was informed only that there were none in relation to the proposals contained in subparagraphs (a) to (c). The Committee expects that information relating to the proposals contained in subparagraphs (d) and (e) will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report. **Subject to its comments and recommendations in section III of the present report, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the recommendations of the Secretary-General.**

IV. Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations

51. The Secretary-General presents a new global human resources strategy for the Organization (A/73/372). Recalling his vision for a new management paradigm to ensure better use of the Organization's resources in support of programme delivery and mandate implementation (see A/72/492), the Secretary-General states that reforming the management of human resources is an important element of his vision

for a stronger, more effective and more agile Organization, and indicates that the strategy is aligned with his proposals for management reform (see A/73/372, paras. 1 and 22).

52. The case for change, along with the guiding principles of the human resources strategy, are described in paragraphs 1 to 11 of the report. The Secretary-General indicates that although reforms in the area of human resources have been undertaken over the past decade, he is seeking to make the Organization more operational and effective (ibid., para. 2). According to his report, the Organization continues to struggle with the challenge of getting people with the right skills to the right place at the right time.

53. The global human resources strategy 2019–2021 proposed by the Secretary-General consists of three components, each having one goal and several strategic actions (ibid., paras. 12–21), as follows:

(a) A policy environment enabling strategic people management, with the goal of establishing a simplified, decentralized, flexible and field-oriented human resources policy framework to drive strategic human resources management and support the delegation of authority;

(b) Proactive talent acquisition and management, with the goal of acquiring, developing and retaining a mobile, field-oriented, high-performing, multilingual and diverse workforce;

(c) A transformed organizational culture, with the goal of ensuring staff well-being and an engaged workforce performing in an enabling work environment.

54. The Advisory Committee recalls that in his previous report on an overview of human resources management (A/71/323, paras. 6 and 165), the Secretary-General expressed his intention to present to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session an updated human resources management framework for the Organization, with three thematic areas upon which such a framework would be built (see also A/71/557, paras. 9 and 11). The Committee notes that the three components of the strategy proposed by the Secretary-General respond broadly to the three thematic areas identified in his report. The Committee supported, at the time, the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a detailed proposal on the evolving human resources framework to the Assembly at its seventy-third session.

55. Concerning the question of why the proposed strategy covers only the 2019–2021 period, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the strategy provides a vision and a prioritized framework of goals and strategic actions to guide work over the three-year period. The Secretary-General intends to either extend the strategy after that period or create a new one, as the reform process would not end in 2021.

Linkage with ongoing human resources management reform and lessons learned

56. According to the Secretary-General, the proposed actions in the new strategy build on the results of prior reforms (see A/73/372, para. 12). As for which elements contained in the proposed strategy could be considered new, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the strategy captures, for the first time, the strategic goals related to human resources management reform in a holistic and comprehensive manner, with related strategic actions defined and prioritized by year to allow for integrated measurement and reporting (see paras. 62 and 63 below).

57. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Organization has engaged in repeated human resources management reforms over the past two decades, as reflected notably in the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform in

1998 (A/53/414) and on investing in people in 2006 (A/61/255/Add.1 and A/61/255/Add.1/Corr.1).[8] The General Assembly also noted the variety of human resources management reform initiatives that the Organization had undertaken since the adoption of its resolutions 63/250 and 65/247 (see resolution 67/255, para. 6). Those include the implementation of new contractual arrangements, the harmonization of conditions of service and the introduction of the young professionals programme. In addition, the Assembly approved a refined managed mobility framework in its resolution 68/265.

58. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in section I of its resolution 71/263, emphasized the fundamental importance of human resources management reform in the United Nations as a contribution to the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and of the international civil service. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to modernize, streamline and integrate the Organization's human resources management structures and functions, taking into account expected benefits, efficiencies and lessons learned from the implementation of previous reforms, and to present detailed proposals to the General Assembly for consideration at its seventy-third session.

59. Noting that the Secretary-General is proposing a new strategy to transform human resources management in the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee sought clarification as to whether there is linkage between the proposed strategy and the past and present human resources management reforms and whether the ongoing reform process would continue or be replaced under the new strategy. The Committee was informed that the strategy proposed by the Secretary-General represents the next step in the ongoing human resources reform effort. The Committee also requested information concerning proposed future reporting on human resources management, the potential for consolidating and streamlining legacy subject-specific reports and, in particular, whether the human resources management reform overview report would be incorporated into any subsequent report on the implementation of the new strategy, if approved by the General Assembly. The Committee was informed that if the strategy is approved, progress on its implementation would be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management. **The Committee expects that further clarification on these matters will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report (see also para. 82 below).**

60. Annex II to the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372) provides a table summarizing the impact, challenges and lessons learned in the reform of human resources management over the past decade. **The Advisory Committee notes that while the topics listed in annex II cover many areas of human resources management, the information provided under challenges and lessons learned is not only incomplete, but also lacks sufficient analysis. The Committee considers that in order to learn lessons from the previous and ongoing human resources management reforms, there is a need to present a comprehensive, detailed and in-depth analysis of the persistent problems and challenges experienced by the Organization under each of the subject areas of human resources management. The Committee reiterates the emphasis of the General Assembly on the importance of learning lessons from the implementation of previous reforms in**

[8] It was stated at the time that the Secretary-General's vision for human resources management reform recognized the need for a paradigm shift to a new culture of empowerment, responsibility, accountability and continuous learning, as well as the importance of strategic change in underlying attitudes and behaviour with regard to human resources management, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the reform measures (A/61/228, para. 11).

the formulation of new proposals (see resolution 71/263, para. 5, and resolution 68/252, para. 11).

61. **The Advisory Committee also reiterates that the proposed strategy should reflect a comprehensive impact assessment of all the human resources reform initiatives undertaken over the past decade and should address issues which have consistently proved challenging over time, many of which have been discussed repeatedly by the Committee, including, but not limited to, deficiencies in staff selection processes, rejuvenation through external recruitment, equal treatment of external and internal candidates, the need to improve performance appraisal and management, the quantity of temporary appointments (including those in receipt of special post allowance) and impediments to achieving equitable geographical distribution and gender balance targets. The Committee stresses again that the strategy should also take account of best practices in the area of human resources management (see also A/71/557, paras. 11 and 12).**

Implementation plan

62. According to the Secretary-General, the implementation plan for the strategy aligns strategic actions with specific time frames (see A/73/372, annex I). The Advisory Committee notes, however, that the implementation plan presented in the report simply shows fully or partially shaded columns for each of the strategic activities proposed for the period 2018–2021. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the shading was used to distinguish between ongoing improvement activities (fully shaded) and time-bound strategic actions (partially shaded).

63. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the current implementation plan does not contain necessary information and lacks clarity in terms of the implementation of the proposed strategy, including specific timelines, concrete actions and offices responsible for actions. The plan should therefore be enhanced to include all essential details on the implementation of the proposed strategy so that progress can be properly measured over time. In particular, given the failure of successive human resources management reforms to address long-standing challenges (see para. 60 above), the Committee is of the view that the implementation plan should be prioritized to tackle the most persistent issues, and include measurable, deliverable and specific targets and timelines.**

Financial implications

64. With respect to any financial implications associated with the implementation of the proposed strategy, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, as a high-level strategic document, the proposed strategy itself does not entail costs; however, the implementation of some of the time-bound strategic actions would require the submission of specific proposals, along with associated costs, for approval by the General Assembly. The proposals contained in the strategy that would require the approval of the Assembly at a later stage include: (a) accelerated recruitment processes; (b) the design of a new mobility system; and (c) the development and implementation of a new performance management system (see also A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 107 and 108).

65. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide more detailed financial information on the potential resource requirements associated with the implementation of any strategic actions in his refined proposal on a global human resources strategy (see also para. 82 below).**

"Regional diversity"

66. The Secretary-General considers that human resources management policies must contribute proactively to what he describes as greater "regional diversity" of the workforce of the Organization (see A/72/492, para. 24). In annex III to his report (A/73/372), the Secretary-General indicates that an analysis of the status of regional diversity in the Secretariat has been conducted. Figures I and II in annex III show the composition of staff by regional group and entity, respectively, as at 31 December 2017. The data presented in the figures will serve as a benchmark against which to monitor progress. The Secretary-General has included an indicator of regional diversity in the senior management compacts to measure related progress from one year to the next. Heads of entities are expected to report on the efforts they have taken to achieve greater regional diversity.

67. Concerning the relationship between regional diversity and the concept of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that while, according to the Secretary-General, the issue of geographical representation is a priority for him, he has instituted an additional focus on regional diversity. The 2018 senior management compacts include commitment to diversity as a specific managerial objective and, as such, heads of entities are encouraged to focus on recruiting staff from regions with fewer international staff serving within their respective entities. Priority is given to countries that are underrepresented and unrepresented, particularly for vacant posts that are subject to the system of desirable ranges. It was indicated to the Committee that regional diversity and equitable geographical representation are considered complementary goals, leading to a "geographically diverse workforce". **Noting that the Secretary-General has already started the implementation of his concept of regional diversity, the Committee emphasizes that efforts undertaken must be fully consistent with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter.**

68. **While the Advisory Committee considers that the Secretary-General may present additional measures to improve human resources management as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, any such measures should not divert focus from that which is enshrined in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter and the relevant decisions of the General Assembly. Moreover, the Committee is not convinced that the concept of regional diversity is necessarily complementary to the aim of equitable geographical representation and may actually divert the focus away from it.**

69. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its concern that efforts to reach out to potential candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, including developing countries, have not been successful. The Committee again recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve geographical representation, based on an in-depth analysis of the real causes of the current imbalances (see A/71/557, para. 46, and A/69/572, para. 38). Details of the strategy, including concrete actions, benchmarks and timelines, should form part of the overall refined human resources strategy, recommended in paragraph 82 below, to be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration.**

70. With respect to the baseline to be applied to address the issue of geographical representation, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the data on regional diversity contained in annex III to the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372) would be used as the baseline against which to measure progress going forward. **The Committee considers that the concept of regional diversity and related data thereon should not be used to measure progress on equitable geographical representation.**

Delegation of authority for human resources management

71. The first strategic action under component A of the proposed strategy relates to the development of a streamlined delegation of authority framework for human resources management (ibid., para. 14 (a)). The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General, as part of his ongoing management reform, has decided to delegate directly to heads of entities across the Secretariat the full administrative authority needed for the effective stewardship of their financial, human and material resources so as to ensure more effective delivery of mandates and strengthened accountability (see A/72/492, para. 73).

72. With respect to human resources management functions, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that line managers responsible for transactional actions would be held responsible and accountable for the procedures concerning the direct application of the staff rules. Where a staff rule allows for discretion within the terms and conditions laid down in the rule, such discretionary decision-making would be delegated to heads of departments. The Committee was further informed that a future framework for the delegation of authority would be determined following an ongoing review of the capacity and requirements of global Secretariat entities.

73. The Advisory Committee recalls that in the context of management reform, it has stressed the importance of establishing well-defined roles and responsibilities in respect of the individuals at all levels to whom authority is to be delegated, and that in relation to the implementation of the proposed system of delegation of authority, assurances will be provided to the General Assembly that the requisite safeguards, including risk and accountability mechanisms, are in place to ensure the responsible exercise of delegation of authority (see A/72/7/Add.49, paras. 18 and 19).

74. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a table indicating the current delegation of authority framework under the Staff Regulations and Rules. **The Committee expects that this table will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.** The Committee notes that the Secretary-General has submitted his latest report on amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules to the General Assembly (A/73/378). The observations and recommendations of the Committee thereon will be provided in a separate report (see also para. 4 above). **The Committee expects that a comparison of the current and future frameworks of the delegation of authority under the Staff Regulations and Rules will be provided to the General Assembly once available.**

Gender balance

75. Annex IV to the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372) contains information on a gender distribution analysis, with figures I and II showing the composition of staff by gender and entity as at 31 December 2017. It is indicated that the Secretary-General has sought to reach the goal through the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity, recognizing different starting points and challenges across the system. As part of his annual assessment with senior managers, the heads of entities will report on the progress that they have made to achieve gender parity.

76. It is also indicated that the measures undertaken have already produced concrete results. Under the leadership of the Secretary-General, in 2018 the United Nations achieved, for the first time, gender parity in the Senior Management Group[9] (see A/73/372/Add.1, para. 77). The proportion of female staff at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels rose considerably, to 30.6 per cent

[9] For membership, see www.un.org/sg/en/content/senior-management-group.

and 34.6 per cent, respectively, as at 31 December 2017 (see A/73/79, table 12), from 20.5 and 21.4 per cent at the end of 2016. The Advisory Committee notes little improvement in the proportion of female staff in the Secretariat overall, with a significantly lower proportion of women serving in field operations (see para. 7 (e) above). **While the Committee notes the efforts made by the Secretary-General to improve gender balance in the Organization, in particular his appointments of female staff at senior levels, it also notes that the ratio of female staff to total staff has increased only slightly in recent years. The Committee recalls that the General Assembly has expressed serious concern about the slow pace of progress towards the goal of 50/50 gender balance in the United Nations system, especially in senior, policymaking and field positions, in conformity with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter (see resolution 71/263, para. 19). The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will undertake further efforts to attract and retain more female staff to work in field operations.**

Staff health and well-being

77. One of the strategic actions under component C of the proposed strategy is the implementation of a holistic approach to duty of care for staff, arising from increased risks to the United Nations across the world and the importance of ensuring that both national and international staff are safe, both physically and psychologically (A/73/372, para. 20 (e)). Information on staff health and well-being, including occupational safety and health care for staff in field duty stations and the system-wide mental health strategy, is provided in the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372/Add.1, paras. 130–149).

78. The Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General promulgated his bulletin on the introduction of an occupational safety and health management system in July 2018 (ST/SGB/2018/5) and launched the United Nations system workplace mental health and well-being strategy, "A healthy workforce for a better world", in October 2018.

79. On a related matter, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly approved the establishment of a Mental Health Officer (P-5) post in the Medical Services Division in New York for the biennium 2018–2019, which was proposed by the Secretary-General to implement the mental health strategy and lead mental health and well-being reform in the Secretariat (see resolution 72/261, para. 178, and A/72/7, paras. VIII.40 and VIII.43). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that that post, among others, had been frozen temporarily owing to the Assembly's decision to reduce by 5 per cent post and non-post resources under sections 29C, Office of Human Resources Management; 29D, Office of Central Support Services; and 29E, Office of Information and Communications Technology, of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (resolution 72/261, para. 177). The Committee was also informed, however, that the urgent need to address the mental health issue in the Organization had not changed, and that while the post had been frozen, substantial work had nevertheless been done on developing and finalizing the mental health strategy. Furthermore, the process of filling the post was under way. **The Committee is concerned about the delays in recruiting the P-5 Mental Health Officer in the Medical Services Division, given the stated urgency with respect to the implementation of the mental health strategy in the Secretariat. The Committee requests that the most up-to-date information on the recruitment of the post be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

Staff engagement survey

80. It is reported that for the first time, the Secretariat conducted an Organization-wide staff engagement survey, which captured perceptions on a range of issues

relating to staff engagement, with the aim of identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement and facilitating action planning across the Secretariat to ensure continuous improvement in key areas (see A/73/732/Add.1, paras. 97–100). The Advisory Committee was provided, upon request, with more detailed information on the results of the survey. **The Committee expects that the information will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

Recommendation

81. With respect to the proposed global human resources strategy 2019–2021, the action required of the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 26 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/372). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as the report presents a high-level strategic framework, it contains no specific elements to be approved by the Assembly (see also paras. 64 and 65 above).

82. **Subject to its observations and recommendations contained in the present report, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a refined global human resources strategy to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.**

V. Assessment of the system of desirable ranges

83. The system of desirable ranges, established in 1960, measures progress towards achieving a wide equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat (see General Assembly resolution 1559 (XV), para. 1), which is derived from Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The latest report on the subject was submitted pursuant to resolution 71/263, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present proposals for a comprehensive review of the system of desirable ranges, including by retaining or widening the current base number of Professional posts, with a view to establishing a more effective tool for ensuring equitable geographical distribution in relation to all posts financed through the regular budget.

84. The report of the Secretary-General sets out the steps for determining the desirable ranges and representation of individual Member States under the current system (A/73/372/Add.3, paras. 13–25). The report states that the system and related methodology approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/220 A has remained mostly unchanged since its adoption in 1987, establishing determinative factors of 55 per cent for contribution, 40 per cent for membership and 5 per cent for population (ibid., para. 12). The report also states that geographical posts, which originally stood at 2,700 on 1 January 1988, numbered 3,600 as at 31 December 2017 (ibid., para. 14).

85. Table 1 of the report provides a summary of options and scenarios for reviewing the system of desirable ranges consolidated since 1988. Table 2 provides, for the consideration of the General Assembly, scenarios for four groups, each containing four proposals, relating to a number of changes in the factors and weightings compared with the current system. The proposals are grouped according to changes in the base figure as follows: group 1: retaining the current base figure (3,600 posts); group 2: widening the base figure to include all international positions (16,800 posts); group 3: widening the base figure to include all international positions except language positions (15,900 posts); and group 4: widening the base figure to include all international positions except language and extrabudgetary positions (12,500 posts) (ibid., para. 26). Table 2 also provides a comparative summary of the groups and the scenarios for each group in terms of the potential impact on the representation status of Member States in the Secretariat.

86. The Secretary-General indicates that all proposals include an updated calculation of the lower and upper limits of the desirable range using the latest base figure and number of Member States, as previously recommended by the Secretary-General (see A/71/323/Add.2). The Secretary-General considers that the final decision regarding the factors and weights to be applied to the system of desirable ranges rests with the General Assembly and that further scenarios can be provided to facilitate deliberations (A/73/372/Add.3, para. 55).

87. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that the final policy decision regarding the system of desirable ranges rests with the General Assembly.**

Annex

Secretariat posts and positions by category, grade and funding source as at 31 December 2017

Category grade	*Regular budget*	*Other assessed*	*Extrabudgetary*	*Staff administered by UNDP[a]*	*Total*
Professional and higher					
USG	50	6	16		72
ASG	43	23	10	2	78
D-2	102	44	12		158
D-1	301	114	104	4	523
P-5	983	374	382	15	1 754
P-4	1 755	1 027	944	145	3 871
P-3	1 739	1 290	1 197	82	4 308
P-2	651	192	446	9	1 298
P-1	4		13		17
INT	250		186		436
R	5		23		28
T	23		153		176
Subtotal	**5 906**	**3 070**	**3 486**	**257**	**12 719**
Field Service					
FS-7	4	20			24
FS-6	85	335	3		423
FS-5	326	1 267	9		1 602
FS-4	307	1 301	5		1 613
FS-3	3	29	1		33
Subtotal	**725**	**2 952**	**18**		**3 695**
General Service and related					
NO-D	16	7	3	6	32
NO-C	76	152	30	63	321
NO-B	264	635	29	250	1178
NO-A	135	131	17	311	594
G-7	576	54	161	96	887
G-6	1672	458	613	470	3213
G-5	1964	2214	638	192	5008
G-4	1489	3435	408	103	5435
G-3	624	2135	155	108	3022
G-2	595	557	56	319	1527
G-1	30	1	1	1	33
TC	80		3		83
SS	285	3	8		296

Category grade	*Regular budget*	*Other assessed*	*Extrabudgetary*	*Staff administered by UNDP*[a]	*Total*
LT	33				33
PIA	29				29
Subtotal	**7 868**	**9 782**	**2 122**	**1 919**	**21 691**
Total	**14 499**	**15 804**	**5 626**	**2 176**	**38 105**

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; FS, Field Service; INT, Interpreter; LT, Language Teacher; NO, National Officer; PIA, Public Information Assistant; R, Reviser; SS, Security Service; T, Translator; TC, Trades and Crafts; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; USG, Under-Secretary-General.

[a] Funding sources are not available in Umoja.